

THE PARKS AND APPROACHES.

We may vaunt of the glories of our capital, its extent, commerce, river, structures, and parks; but we cannot boast of our avenues or approaches. There is no city of the modern world, inferior though it be in aggregate advantages, which does not distance us, *longo intervallo*, in the grand essential to preliminary importance—open and imposing avenues and approaches.

Who, for a moment, would compare Paris, in these particulars, to London? We have, it is true, some noble central streets and squares, such as the Fleet-street line, Oxford and Holborn, Pall Mall, and not least, Regent-street and Portland-place; but all these terminate in infinite and everlasting masses of brick, and affrontments of chimneys; we have, too, a long boulevard,—the New and City roads. Nature endowed us with a river, and we have erected bridges.

In this department of architecture, no city in the world is, I believe, comparable to London, which being placed on a site possessing every element for adornment, appears to have been planned, if ever it was, which I very much doubt without any regard to those first postulates of grandeur.

There are few cities which some great imitators of Appian have not illustrated by cutting out noble avenues, if not arcs and portals, as well as by the erection of that inestimable desideratum, quay walls to rivers.

Paris is notable amongst all others for her notable avenues,—that of Neuilly hardly requires mention; the Boulevards, Tuilleries, Champs Elysées, various approaches and barriers of colossal dimensions, and even quay walls to its tideless stream.

Brussels, too, is familiar to English travellers in these attributes of civic consequence; and even Dublin has her granite quays of chiselled masonry to the Liffey.

It is manifest that these advantages, the products of industry and expense, under the guidance of good taste, formed no part of an original plan, but that these embellishments were added as the cities grew; and that the enterprise of the citizens effected what the advancing taste of the age demanded, or that some great potentate imagined and executed what was useful and pleasing to the time.

Some may call these things accidents; so perhaps, in some sense, they are, as is the accumulation of houses and population in any city. If so, then our metropolis is an unhappy accident,—unhappy, at least, in its peculiar meagreness and utter want of both quay walls to the parent of commerce, Father Thames, and of appropriate approaches to this overgrown mart of all nations.

Having before, in THE BUILDER, alluded to the openings of one avenue in continuation of Pall Mall, allow me now to suggest another of not less important display, although of considerably less expense, in another quarter. The line of Portland-place, terminated by the Quadrant, but drawn out *in extenso*, you may say, to the Bank—on the other end sinks in a rail and shrubbery (perhaps, rather, scrubbery), at Park-crescent. This line is continued in a direction straight northward, by the open esplanade across Regent's-park, shewing in the distance Hampstead-hill. A very short interval of garden (most certainly a pretty one) intervenes between the top of Portland-place and the park: the distance is not more than 420 feet, and this all public ground, without an obstruction. How trifling would be the cost of making 400 feet of carriage way, and railing it in on each side, and of constructing gates and lodges if necessary? The distance hence to the esplanade, or long walk, is all open park, and is perhaps 400 yards; this would require only a firm road to the point of junction, and when opened and finished would present as fine a *chaussée* as ever Paris can exhibit, terminating southward at Langham church and spire, northward merging into the hilly undulations of Hampstead.

The cost of this whole improvement could not (under private management) exceed 3,000*l.*, and would bestow on this region of stately drear, now languishing in the dinge and gloom of bygone importance, a lightness and character not to be appreciated but by those accustomed to the study and practice of such plans and improvements.

No property, no house, could be injured by the change; on the contrary, the traffic must be, in a measure, diverted from the portals of the crescent by the medium route, whilst sufficient space of ornamental *parterre* would yet remain undisturbed for the *épiement* of the frontages in the locality. The opening of the long walk, as an approach to the railway terminus and Hampstead, over the most elevated portion of this very pleasing, if not beautiful park, would also be a boon to the public (I mean the opening of the whole esplanade for private carriages), as beneficial to the health and enjoyment of the citizens as to the increased requirements of a teeming population. It was evidently the intention of the monarch who planned this park, and who laid out and planted this esplanade, that such adaptation should one day be made, to carry out the tasteful design of his offspring in the march of improvement—Regent-street.

Now, as to this park and the new purchase of Primrose-hill, perhaps a few words may be excused on that subject.

The Commissioners of Woods and Forests, whatever be their powers or incompetencies, have certainly the merit of having, within a few years, done work, in the plantation and embellishment of St. James's, Victoria, and Regent's parks—the purchase of 180 acres, including Primrose-hill—and in laying out plans for another park at Battersea, in order to provide lungs for a prospective town, and a generation yet to spring up in that district; but for two years all has been at a stand-still—a dead halt! Commissioners fluctuate with the Administration; they change in their goings out and comings in, with the Government of the day, and can have but little experience in the routine of office. No, the management rests with the permanent fixtures at the board. Some people call this rather mismanagement. However, the commissioners always discovered an anxiety to carry out public improvements with spirit. But who can blame the commissioners for hesitating to carry out essential public designs, if the public purse be exhausted, and that there are no funds in the exchequer of that department?

The point on which I would animadvert is the naked unplanted condition of Primrose-hill or Albert-park, which has been two years enclosed, and particularly the omission to secure a building plot on the verge of Primrose-hill-park, interposed between that and Regent's-park—which is the only spot on which a gate or entrance could be effected facing that of the latter. This plot is directly opposite the suspension-bridge (over the canal) which forms the exit from Regent's-park,—and a detour of 70 or 80 feet is now made close beyond the bridge, to the right, in order to approach the entrance to Primrose-hill.

Should this plot be built on—and it is proposed and labelled for building—a row of houses will present a bastion which will effectually cut off the view from park to park; and this is the most pleasing *coup-d'œil*, where, looking through the now matured groves, the hills are revealed merging one into the other.

This point is most pleasing, if not absolutely picturesque, but the eternal continuation of houses will mar all—not to speak of the two opposing entrances (for Park-road separates them) being 80 feet apart, and askew. Thus not only is the connection between the parks (with all view from one to the other) to be cut off, but all order violated, which should make the portals of office (if not the paths which lead to them) straight.

Above two years has this place of popular resort been paled in: so much time has been lost in its furniture by plantation—not one shrub gives note of a living Repton at the board. Yes; there is a garden—a bare garden, 100 paces square; and this is studded with miniature plants: besides there are planted here divers bare poles, and gymnastic contrivances, to exercise the athlete; the plot so complete, and close to the open road, as to notify to all passengers the amount of official care for the amusement of the mob. What youth would there resort to be a mountebank in public view? No: place it in some sequestered nook.

Space admonishes me to leave this subject, and only to touch upon one item more—the hideous deformities in Hyde-park! Here are

the serjeant's guard-barrack, the magazine, the sub-rangers' lodge, another for an underling, and a hovel for some inappreciable use—these form a sequence of five unsightly constructions that would be a disgrace to the byelanes of Epping or Willeaden, and which occupy a space of six acres, paled off in a shapeless longitudinal section: the most beautiful and sylvan portion of Hyde-park, near the Receiving-house at the Serpentine, is thus deformed and disenchanting.

These intrusions destroy the privacy (if the term is admissible) of our national park. In this spot, at unaccustomed hours, I have ranged, and, looking toward the Serpentine, have indulged the pleasing illusion of complete sequestration; turn round two points of the compass, the elysium vanishes; the hovels, the poles, the lounging guards, at once awaken the palpable fact that you cannot indulge in a rural dream (momentary though it be) short of Richmond-park.

It would be vain to inquire the utility of these obtrusions; for all those piles are drooping in neglect, and afford only a refuge for one *humble hanger-on* and a *locus penitentia* for, perhaps, a refractory squad of the Cold-streams. QUONDAM.

A LEASH OF PORTRAITS.

It will be remembered that a subscription was raised some time ago by the Builders' Society to present a testimonial of friendship to Mr. Thomas Cubitt, and that a portrait being determined on, to be afterwards engraved for the subscribers, Mr. Pickersgill, the Royal Academician, was commissioned to paint it.

Calling at Mr. Pickersgill's last week, we found, amongst a batch of portraits going on, this "counterfeit presentment" of Mr. Cubitt next to a picture of Mr. Charles Barry, and on the other side of the latter the *crâne ressemblance* of Mr. Grissell,—a triad which, when exhibited in the Academy, will interest many of our readers. The picture of Mr. Cubitt is a full length; those of Mr. Barry and Mr. Grissell are three-quarters. Mr. Barry is in a loose morning robe of quiet colour, with a roll in his hand, and an elevation of the Royal Tower on the table near him: Mr. Cubitt stands with his hand in his vest, an accustomed position; and Mr. Grissell, out of doors, wears a cloak, the red velvet lining of which, with other accessories, produces a result sufficiently gay. As likenesses, these pictures are remarkably successful; and as works of art they are equal to any thing Mr. Pickersgill has done for a long time.

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

The first stone of the new church of Stanmore parish was lately laid by the Earl of Aberdeen, in presence of her Majesty the Queen Dowager, the Bishop of London, &c. It is to accommodate 800 persons, one half free. The funds are being raised by subscription.—The foundation stone of the first Primitive Methodist Chapel and School-rooms in Bristol was laid on Tuesday week. The building will be in the Norman style, and will contain 450 sittings, and school room for 300 children.

The new church of St. John the Evangelist, Ashton Hayes, Tarrin, Cheshire, was consecrated on 9th inst. The edifice is of stone, with a spire, and contains 305 sittings, more than one half free. It has been erected, and fitted up at an expense of about 3,000*l.* at the sole cost of Mr. William Atkinson, of Ashton Hayes, who has also erected a parsonage house and schools, besides endowing the church with 1,000*l.*, and a repair fund of 150*l.*—The cost of the proposed Temperance-hall, at Leicester, lately noticed, is stated, it seems, at 3,000 guineas.—The exterior of the chancel of Whitby Church, has had its ornamental turrets restored: they were blown down in 1829.—During a recent gale the wooden beacon erected on the sand banks, near the mouth of the river Esk, below Ravensglas, was blown down.

COMPETITION.—Plans and specifications are wanted from architects and gas engineers for gas-works, at Walsall, by 7th April: the successful competitor to superintend the works.